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O F

*John Lacy, Esq;*

Dated July 6. 1708.

And Directed to

*JOSIAH WOODWARD, D. D.*

L O N D O N :

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A N S W E R  
T O  
Mr. *Lacy's* LETTER.

SIR,

UPON the perusal of your Letter, published concerning my Remarks on the *Modern Prophets*; I did not see any great Reason to return a speedy Answer to it, except it was to shew the *invalidity* of those *Arguments* which have been brought to prove their *Divine Inspiration*. This I perceive you *expect*, and I am *ready* to grant, that you may be convinc'd of my sincere Desire to bring You, and your Friends, out of a Condition which I think very dangerous. I shall therefore consider the Scope of your whole Letter, and according to your Desire, Sir, I make my earnest Supplication to *Almighty God*, to make my Discourse effectual to this Purpose.

I cannot think my self excused from endeavouring to vindicate the Truth of GOD, by your alledging ( Page 7th ) *That the incomprehensible, ineffable, holy and true One, does not need the Hand of Man to support his never-failing Veracity*; any more than his Ark once did that of *Uzzah*, &c. For, a true Zeal for GOD's Honour is the Duty of all Men, and more specially of his Embassadors. Every Body must

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that Character, that had not the *Affection or Courage* to say on all proper Occasions, "My Good and *Faith-ful* Master never spake a false Sentence; nor ever sent a *false Message*. And if in this case, Sir, you will compare us to *Uzzah*, our Fault is not that we put our *Hand* to stay the *Ark of GOD* when it shaketh, but that we do not put our *Shoulders* to it, which was *Uzzah's* default. We are rather apt to under-do, than do too much, in a Work so *necessary* and so *important*.

But here Sir, I do not oppose You, as if I thought you denied the *Truth of GOD*; for you confess his *never-failing Veracity* in the Words before cited: But I must say, I lament that you represent it as one of the most difficult things that may be, to clear it and make it out: Which will, I fear, give Occasion to some to say, that it cannot be done. In this case a good Man should certainly be very cautious of giving Occasion to the *Adversary to blaspheme*; but I perceive your intemperate Desire of skreening the *New Prophets* has driven You to it.

However, you declare your *Disposition to renounce any Error you shall be convinced of* (Page 5): in order to which, I desire your *unprejudiced Consideration* of the following Particulars, which comprehend, as I take it, the full *Purport* of your Letter.

I. You greatly mistake the *Law of GOD* made against *False Prophets*, when You think the chief Force of it intended against such Prophets as spake in the Name of *False Gods*: as your Arguments for it (Page 6, and 7.) do intimate: *These* indeed are sentenced to Death by this Law, no less than the *Others*. Deut. XVIII. 20. 21. *The Prophet which shall presume to speak a Word in my Name which I have not Commanded him to speak; Or that shall speak in the Name of other Gods; even that Prophet shall die.* The Words

a single Sentence spoken in the Name of God, without his Authority, is here made a Capital Crime by God himself. What then will become of those who have spoken three or four Hours, and as they think under Inspiration; when it is not so? as Sr. R. B. declareth in his Answer to several Treatises, (Page. 9.) How dangerous must it be to abet them in such Doings, or to trust in such Declarations, which are by their own Confession, part Flesh and part Spirit? Had the Prophets or Apostles done so, where had been the Certainty of Revelation? What wise or good Man can allow this?

The Reason, Sir, why I did not insert that Clause of this Divine Law, which points at the Prophets of False Gods, was, because I did not then mind the pertinency of it to the present Case; as it may very well be considered. For if the Modern Prophets are not inspired by the true GOD, and yet do speak to Men in the Person of God; they are the Prophets of a False God; and then they bring both the Points of this terrible Law to push against their own Breasts.

You say, Sir, You find no Instance of a False Prophet that spake in the Name of GOD judicially executed by Men; though you find the True Prophets throughout the Scripture, treated by the People with numerous Reproaches, &c. This, You say, you read in the English Text, being wholly unlearned in the Original Version. I would here set you right, Sir, with all the decency I can. An Original Version sounds very incongruously; a Version is the same with a Translation, and if it be an Original, it cannot be a Version or Translation. But the English Bible, you may be sure, Sir, will give you the true History of the Hebrew one, without any need of the Learning of Criticism. Now if you do not find any False Prophet executed in all that History, as you say you do not, this doth not null the Law of God made against them but shewc

the corruption of the Times, if they had *False Prophets*, and did not do *Justice* upon them. You are sure, Sir, you find the *Law of GOD* against them in your *Bible*; and you may see that it was principally designed against such as prophesied *falsely* in *God's Name*, by the explanation of it; Ver. 21, 22. *And if thou say in thine Heart, how shall we know the Word which the LORD hath not spoken?* That is, How may we be sure that a Prophet is presumptuous, and is not from God, that we may not put any Prophet to death wrongfully? To this the next Verse replies; *When a Prophet speaketh in the Name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass; this is the Thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the Prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of Him.* That is, in such a Case, you need not be afraid of any Threatning he denounces against you upon your putting him to Death. You are sure by his foretelling *false Things in God's Name*, that he is not from *GOD*; and therefore you need not fear any Wrath from *GOD*, when you execute him. This may sufficiently convince You, Sir, that I had reason to remark, that the *Righteousness* of this Sentence of Death on the Prophet that foretold *False Things*, is grounded on the *impossibility* of his receiving any *false Message* from *GOD*.

It is not pleasant to me, to repeat things over and over; but I spare no Pains for your Conviction.

You Endeavour, Sir, to invalidate this *Law* against *false Prophets*, (Page 7th.) by saying, that the *Punishment* of the *Prophet* seems to be reserved to the *immediate Hand of God*. But if it only seems so in other Places, it is in this *Law* positively and fully put into the *Hands of the Jewish Magistrate*.

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And tho' you suggest, that God seldom invests a *Temporal Judge*, with the *Gift of discerning of Spirits*; yet not only a *Temporal Judge*, but every one that has *common Sense*, has an Ability to know whether a Thing comes to pass or not, when he is upon the Place where it is to be done; and consequently may well judge by the Event, which is the *true*, and which is the *false Prophet*. You say in the same Page, that you *FOU ND* your self *wholly on the Scripture*; but one would suspect a want of *Application* in your Mind, or some other Defect, when you Build so much beside your intended *Foundation*.

Thus, I conceive, I have fully considered the first Particular; to wit, your being in the Wrong in your Endeavours to turn the *Edge of the Law* of God, made against such as *foretel false Things in the Name of the true God*, chiefly or wholly *against such as Prophecy in the Name of false Gods*.

And now, in the Conclusion of this *Particular*, permit me, Sir, to ask you, for what Reason you shew such a Tenderness for *false Prophets*? Is it not one of the *highest Presumptions and most flagrant Crimes*, for a vain and sinful Man to *personate his MAKER* without his *Authority* for it? Is it not one of the *most pernicious Things* that can be done upon Earth, to seduce Men into wrong Paths, to the Hazard of their *Present and Eternal Peace*, under pretence of having an *Order* from God to be his *Oracle* to Men? Why then, Sir, are you so industrious to skreen them? If you are in Pain for the *Modern Prophets*, you may consider that the *Political Law* of the *Jews* against *false Prophets* is not in Force in our *Polity*; nor have we, as you and your Partners have Experienced, any such *Sanguinary Law* in all our *Statute-*

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*Book.* But if the Fear of *Man* doth not, the Fear of *God* surely ought to restrain such a *Liberty*, or rather *Licentiousness* of *Prophecyng*. For the Severity of that *Law* of *God* to the *Jews* against false Prophets, demonstrates *God's Jealousie* of his Honour, which cannot but be nearly touch'd in so grand a Point as that of *Legislation*.

I now proceed to the Second Particular,

II. The Instances you bring of Things declared by the Prophets of *God*, which did not come to pass, were not declared *absolutely* and *unconditionally*, and therefore do not reach the Point in Dispute before us. You see the Point stated thus in the Second Page of my Remarks, *viz.* Whether *Almighty God* at any time sends a Prophet to declare a Thing absolutely in his Name; no Condition being either expressed or implied; and at the same time secretly purposeth that it shall not come to pass? And the same is repeated Page 11th. But the Instances alledged in your Letter are wide from this Case.

Your first Instance (Page 7.) is of *God's Covenant* with *David*, mentioned in the 89th Psalm, where in one Place, it is mentioned as a Co-  
“*venant sworn to David by the Holiness of God*, that  
“*he would not lie unto him*; that he had anointed  
“*him with his holy Oil*. The *Enemy* shall not exact  
“*upon him*, and I will beat down his *Foes* before  
“*him*; but my *Faithfulness* and my *Mercy* shall be  
“*with him*. Yet in the 38th Verse, we find  
“*David* asserting, (say you) in an *Appeal to God*:  
“*But thou hast cast off and abhorred thine Anointed*;  
“*thou hast made void the Covenant of thy Servant*,  
“*and hast set up the right Hand of his Adversaries*,  
“*and made all his Enemies to rejoice*.

Alas,

Alas, Sir, to what purpose in the World is this alledged? It may give occasion to the *Adversaries* of Scripture to *laugh* and *scorn* it; in that you leave this as an inexplicable Thing, and seem to give Hints that God had promised *David* what he did not perform; which would indeed be what is as horrible to me to mention as it can be to you to hear, even to *lie unto David*. Which I peremptorily deny, and again say, it *never was nor ever can be*. This Case of *David* is so plain, that a Child that is well *Catechized* may explain it. God was pleased to add many promises of outward Blessings to King *David* and his *Posterity*, in his gracious *Covenant* with him. Now a *Covenant* necessarily implies *Conditions*, and if the *Duty Covenanted for* be denied, there is no colour of *Injustice* or *Unfaithfulness* if the *Benefits* that are conditionally annexed to it be debarr'd, and if contrary *Inflictions* succeed. Now we read, alas! of *David's* scandalous *Sins* and *Enormities*, and can we then wonder at the *Troubles* of his *House*, or the *Unprosperousness* of his *Affairs*? And as you say, Sir, no *consequence* was drawn from it to the *prejudice of God's Honour*; for none could be drawn from it: And *David* had great Reason to say, *I will sing of the Mercies of the Lord for ever, &c.* for indeed, God dealt very mercifully with him, in that he did but *Chastize in Mercy*, where he might have *cut off* in Judgment.

Your next Instance is in the Prophet *Jeremiah*, (Page 8.) whose passionate Complaints are already in part considered in my Remarks; and I shall only take notice of what you here add, which all *tender Christians* will rather wish you had omitted; Chap. XV. 18. *Why is my Pain perpetual, and my Wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed?*

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*Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a Lie, and as Waters that fail?* Here I cannot but say again, to what purpose is this Citation? It is only an *unjustifiable Expostulation*, and that of a Man almost distracted by *Oppression* and *Scorn*. I know some Expositors Apologize for the Prophet, and think he alludes to the *Faunts* he had from the *Scoffers*, who often upbraided him with his trusting in *Lies*: But methinks the best that can be said for him, is that which *Job* pleads for himself (*Job 6. 26.*) *Do ye imagine to reprove the Speeches of one that is desperate?*

I shall be brief in the rest, to avoid prolixity. The *Destruction* threaten'd against *Nineveh* in *Forty Days*, was plainly *conditional*, in that God called them to *Repentance*: and their *Repentance* appeared to be *general* and *effectual*, which gave *Glory* to God, and turned away His *Wrath*.

The *Denunciation* of *Death* to King *Hezekiah* respected the present posture of *Things*, which were altered by his *Prayer*; for almost all the *Promises* and *Threatnings* of God, relating to this *Life* and that to come, are *Conditional*. Indeed I know but one exception, and that is the *Promise of a Saviour*, *Gen. III. 15.*

King *Josiah* had a *Promise* of being gathered to his *Grave in Peace*: And he had enjoy'd the *Promise*, had he not unreasonably and unwarrantably put himself upon a *Battle* with the King of *Egypt*, from whom he had no *provocation*, but the contrary: And this against the express direction of God, *2 Chron. XXXV. 22.* Nevertheless *Josiah* would not turn his *Face* from him, but disguised himself that he might fight with him; and hearkened not unto the *Words* of *Nechoh* from the *Mouth* of God. Those *Words* are rehearsed in the *Verse* before;

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Forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with thee, that he destroy thee not.

From the ironical Expression of Michnah, which I explain'd in the Remarks, you inferr, (Page 9) that I allow, that God may speak to Men in what Phrase of expression he pleases to use: which it never was in my Heart to deny. By a Phrase of expression, I suppose you mean, a Phrase or Expression.

The Case of Benhadad's recovery from his Sickness is already considered, as I conceive, to the full satisfaction of any rational Person, whose Mind is free. Remarks Page 18, 19.

The Threatning of God to the Children of Israel, Judg. x. 11. *I will deliver you no more*; was manifestly Conditional: And so was the Establishment of Eli's House, 1 Sam. II. 30.

The Syrians might be smitten in Aphek till all were consumed that were there, as promised; 2 King. XIII. 17. and yet the whole Nation of the Syrians might not be consumed. These are no great Mysteries.

From the supposed Difficulties in the Old Testament, you proceed (Page 10) to those in the New: The first of which mentioned, is the saying of our Blessed Saviour, Joh. II. 19. *Destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it again.* Now in the uttering of this, it is very likely that Our Saviour pointed towards his own Body (*τὸν ναὸν τετόν*) for we find that they are called *false Witnesses* who testified that he *affirmed this of the Fabrick of the Jewish Temple.* (Math. 26. 60.) However it sufficeth to our purpose to say, that he usually *explained* to his Disciples the things which he spake *Obscurely*, at their Request; and that he promised that *whosoever would do his Will should know his Doctrine.* (Jo: VII. 17.) to manifest it to others would be to no purpose.

You say further, Sir, (Page 10.) It is difficult to comprehend, (or rather apprehend) the accomplishment of that Promise; Matth: XII. 39, 40. Ye shall not have gone over the Cities of Israel, before the Son of Man come. But if we understand the going over these Cities of the finishing their Mission therein, as the Original hints to us, (*ἐν μὴ τελέσθαι*) and if we understand this coming, of the Descent of the Spirit of Christ at the famous Pentecost, as many Expositors do; the difficulty is dissolved.

You proceed, Sir, (Page 10) It is very questionable whether that was fulfilled which our Saviour promised, Jo. I. 51. Verily, verily, I say unto You; hereafter ye shall see Heaven opened, and the Angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. This would be sad indeed, if what Truth it self had promised by a double Assertion should remain unaccomplish'd. But tho' the accomplishment of this Promise be not recorded, there is no Question but it hath or will be made good. Heaven and Earth may pass away, but the Word of Christ cannot pass away unfulfill'd.

You say, Sir, that from these Observations on the Scripture, you conclude, " That a Word really spoken from G O D may fail of coming to pass, and has done, according to the obvious Sense it had or could have among Men: And all this without Impeachment of the veracity of God. — And it is unaccountable Arrogance, and horrible Impiety in any Man to reject the Authority of the Scripture as the Word of God, because some parts of it are above their reach to fathom, &c. And this you plead in the behalf of the Modern Prophets, in the Failure of the accomplishment of things foretold by them. (Pag. 11.)

But if this your Argument has any force; it must be, that we did not, and could not understand what *John Potter* said of the Resurrection of *Mr. Emes*; when he declared in *Extasie*, Jan. 1. 1707. *Know ye the Day when my Servant was interr'd? Five Months from that day, the Twenty fifth day of May, you shall behold him rise again. One Month above the Number of days that Lazarus was in his Grave. The very Hour he was put in the Earth shall be arise. Know ye the day my Children?* (Yes,) Well. *The Twenty fifth day of May. Right. I say ye shall see him rise that's now dead.* If this be not intelligible, no Words can be: And to suggest that there may be some meaning in them, that we cannot find out, and that they may for all this be the *Words of God*; is to ascribe the *foulst Impputation* to the *Best of Beings*: As if the infinitely *Good* and *Wise* God would, after so plain a Declaration, hide a thing from us, which we are concern'd to know the *Truth* of, above all things in the *World*; namely, whether it is the *Voice* of our *Maker* and *Redeemer* that speaks to us or not? And this when the *Case* was brought by his own *Mouth* (in the *Language* of the *Prophets*) to this *Issue*. Sir, if you can believe this, I shall pity and pray for you; but shall dispair of your *Conviction* by any thing that can be said. However, as I have promised to consider the *Scope* of your Letter, I go on.

There is even a *Decisive Sign* of our *Blessed Saviour's Messiahship*, about which you raise scruples to the *Grief* surely of all good Christians. The *Sign* is that of the *Prophet Jonah*, *Matt. XII. 39*. Where, according to the *resemblance* of *Jonah's Resurrection* (as the *Type*) after his being *three Days and three Nights in the Belly of a Fish*; the

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Resurrection of our Blessed Saviour (the Antitype,) is declared to be after his being *three Days and three Nights* in the Heart of the Earth. And this was the *only Sign* that our Saviour insisted upon to clear the Truth of his *Divine Mission*. There shall no other *Sign* be given. And we find that the Jews remembred this *Sign*, and took the utmost Care about it; *Sealing the Sepulchre and setting a Watch.* Mat. XXVII.63. And after all, Sir, you make this most *unsufferable Remark* upon it, (Page 10.) Now whether our Lord's Body was more than one Day and two Nights in the Sepulchre? or whether that Prediction could be any ways *strictly fulfill'd*, I leave all Men to judge? So likewise it is *questionable*, whether that was fulfill'd in John I. 51?

As a just Answer to this, Sir, and in this necessary Vindication of the *Messiahship* of our Blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ, I cannot but say; That I leave it to all the Christian World to judge, whether you have not suggested such a *blasphemous Imputation* to our *Adored L O R D and Saviour*, as nothing but an *extream Disorder* of your Mind can excuse you from the *Guilt* of? If that which our Blessed Saviour declares, and *insists* upon, as the *only decisive Sign* of the Truth of his *Messiahship* be not *strictly fulfill'd*, yea, if it could no ways be *strictly fulfill'd* as you say; Where is the *undoubted Ground* of the *Christian Faith and Hope*? And what occasion is hereby given to the Patrons of Infidelity to triumph?

The least Reparation that you can make for this *Publick Reproach* of the *Christian Religion*, will be, that you *publickly Retract* it; for the Scandal given is very great; in that you not only represent it as *impossible* that our Blessed Saviour's *only decisive Sign* should be fulfilled, but have appealed to all the World to judge of the *Clearness* of

But to solve this Difficulty, which you declare impossible to be done: Do you not perceive, Sir, that our Blessed Saviour's Words are; *As Jonas was three Days and three Nights in the Whales Belly, so shall the Son of Man be three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth?* Now can you prove that *Jonas* was any time longer in the *Fish's Belly*, than our Saviour in his *Sepulchre*? Or can you deny, that a *Part of a Day* is in all common Estimate computed for a *day*? Is it not so in our *Birth*? and consequently in our *Burial* too? With what colour of Truth then could you be so peremptory, that *this Prediction of our Saviour could n<sup>o</sup> ways be strictly fulfill'd*? And this to apologize for the failure of the *decisive Signs of false and self-condemned Prophets*. I write this, Sir, in true Christian *Compassion* to your Person, tho' with true Christian *Indignation* to so *Fundamental* an Error. And I heartily beseech G O D to open your Eyes, both in the *Matter* of this Argument, and in the *Occasion* of it.

In order to this, I desire you to consider the next Particular.

III. There is no Instance in the Scriptures of the Failure of any Event declared by a *Prophet of God*, to be the *decisive Sign and Touchstone* of his Divine Mission. This is *Home* to the Case before us; and you must prove that your *decisive Sign* hath been fulfilled, or give up your Pretensions to *Divine Inspiration*: Unless you can prove that *true Prophets have failed* in this, which is a *Contradiction*. Yet this is that about which you labour, and *disquiet* your self in *vain*.

You have declared in the Preface to the Third part of your *Warnings*, (Pag. 8.) *That you would acknowledge your Delusion before all the World, if the mighty*

mighty Power of God did not attest your Denunciations within Six Months from the 29th of Octob. 1707, and to this you there set your Hand. And in the 29th Page of your Book, called, God's Dealings to John Lacy, you say, That after you had frequently and urgently supplicated Divine Wisdom, that he would be pleased to make known to you some defined time, wherein he would vouchsafe more publickly to attest your Mission: accordingly in October last, you was warranted by 2 or 3 Inspirations to insert the Six Months before mentioned in your Preface to the third Part of your Warnings.

Now after such a plain Declaration and Confession of this matter, I could not have thought that You would have said (as in the 11th Pag. of the Letter), that *I have misrepresented you, and that you never did say that your Mission should be proved by many unquestionable Miracles before the 29th of April last.* This Evasion is so subtle, that I cannot easily find it out. You pray'd, you say, for a public Attestation of your Mission by unquestionable Miracles; and was thereupon authorized, by three Inspirations, (a treble Cord which, one would think, should not fail you) to declare publickly, That if the Mighty Power of GOD did not attest your Mission within Six Months (which ended April 29th last) you would acknowledge the Delusion. Now, can this be thought otherwise than a full Answer to your Prayers? How does the Mighty Power of God attest a Mission, but by Miracles? and if they are not unquestionable, how are they convincing? So that I cannot see your Justice or Simplicity in charging me (in your Letter Page 11.) with a Misrepresentation, when I said; Mr. Lacy had a promise, he saith, that his Divine Mission should be prov'd by many unquestionable Miracles before the 29th of April last. But I now see what your Evasion is; and it seems very disingenuous, namely, that

you had not a full Promise of unquestionable Miracles, but only an Order to acknowledge the *Delusion*, if you *missed* of them. But then, since you have nothing yet that can be vouched as an *unquestionable Miracle*, or the *mighty Power of God* attesting, why have you not fully acknowledged it? And why have you only published a perplexed *Declaration*, which neither *owns* nor *disowns* it? and which tends to deceive your self and some others. Whereas if you have an *unquestionable Attestation*, you ought to produce it; if you have none, you ought to say so, and *own* the *Delusion*.

The other thing in which you say I misrepresented you, was my inserting *fulfill'd* instead of *Printed*; which was wholly owing to a *Frier* in the Print: the Ink failing in my *Copy*, I could, only guess at the *Word* by the *Sense*. But in this Sir, no Wrong is done you: For what could be intended by the Order for printing, but to establish a *publick Record* of a *Truth*, if it were *fulfilled*; and of an *Untruth*, if it were *unfulfilled* according to the *stated time*; which is now the *Case*. But let us return to what is more material.

No Body can deny, That Sir R. B. was positive in this *Case*. He declares it to be a *decisive Prediction*, upon which the *Truth* of the *Prophets* depended; in his *Answer to several Treatises*, Page 87. The same he also affirmeth there concerning the *Resurrection* of Dr. *Emes*; declaring it likewise to be a *Touchstone* of the *modern Prophets*, whereby they are to be concluded *true* or *false*; and consequently such as must, in Duty to *G O D*, be *embraced* and *reverenced* if the *Sign came to pass*; or be *renounced* and *condemned*, in Duty to *G O D*, if the *Signs came not to pass*. And according to this Declaration both Sides attended the *Event*, by which the

Question was to be finally decided ; the *Prophets* and their *Believers* boasting with great Assurance of the *Accomplishment* ; others doubting or denying, but all waiting for the *final Decision*. But on the 29th of *April* last, before which Day the mighty Power of *GOD* was to have *attested* your *Mission*, as you had told the World by the *Warrant* of *three inspired Persons*, you published an Account of *God's Dealings* with you. In this you rehearse some things done by you, which you thought extraordinary, but not to reach the *Promise* of the attesting Power of *God* ; and yet you only there declare your self *deluded in Part*. Whether this was done by Advice among your selves, or was the Result of your own *Mind* only, I know not ; but pardon me if I say, that all impartial Reason sees that this Declaration of yours was either *weak* or *unsincere*. For since you had not such publick *Attestations* by *unquestionable Miracles*, as were promised, you was warranted to declare, that this pretended *Voice of God* was *none of his*. Now, by your Failure in a Duty so plain, you have occasioned much *Evil*. You have, I fear, deluded and hardened your self and others in pernicious *Errors*, and given great Occasion to the *Enemies of Divine Revelation* to *Scoff* and *triumph*. But in the Close of that Account of *God's Dealings* with you, you refer the Issue of the Cause to the other Sign, *Dr. Emes's Resurrection*, saying, Page 31. to that Day it is referred, to know more of the *unsearchable Ways of God*. Well, that Day is now gone and past, and all your Hopes of the grand *Miracle* are quash'd ; yet we find you farther from the Point of determining now than before. Instead of this, you frame three *Ways of evading Conviction* by the Failure of this *Sign*, tho' declared by *Sir R. B.* to be a *decisive one*.

First, You say, the Prophetick Influence over-rulth his own precedent Resolution ( in the 12th Page of your Letter ) that is to say, will go on, notwithstanding all the preceding Falsifications: which is to impute Inconsistency and Self-Contradiction to the infinitely wise and holy Spirit. But what Christian Ear can hear this? or what Soul can allow it?

Secondly, You say, You did not go to the Burial-Place, because you had no such Order from your own Mouth under Inspiration; in the 13th Page of your Letter. But what trifling is this? Is not the Authority of the Spirit in the Mouth of one Prophet, as valid and binding as in the Mouth of another? If you dare not trust your Brother-Prophecy, why would you persuade us to do it? We cannot but look on this Excuse as frivolous and vain.

Thirdly, You blame Sir R. Bulkeley, for publishing the Resurrection of Dr. Emes, as a decisive Sign, without advising with the Inspired about it. Thus to save the Reputation of your Prophets, you wound that of your Friend. Your Words are these, in the 12th Page of your Letter: " As to Sir Richard Bulkeley's having published to the World, " that the raising of Dr. Emes's Body on the 25th " of May, should be the determining and deciding " Sign upon which the Truth of the Prophets de- " pended; I can positively assure you, --- That " neither I nor any of them were consulted by " that Gentleman, or knew what he said on that " Point, till we saw it in Print: therefore his De- " claration cannot justly be charged upon us, or " properly be called ours.

I reply; Sir Richard is of Age, and is able to answer for himself. But however, permit me to ask; How came it, that ye that were Prophets, who sometimes in your Applause of this Gift de-

clare, that nothing of *Concernment* to you passes, tho' at the greatest Distance, but you are advertised of it by *Revelation*; how came you now to be ignorant of such an *essential Concern*? Yea, how could the *Spirit*, by which you speak, importune the Publication of this Book of Sir *Richard's*; which, in the Event, proves so much to the *Overthrow* of the *Pretensions* of the *Prophets*? And further, why did not ye that are *Prophets*, publickly disown and protest against this Passage in Sir *Richard's* Book when it came abroad, and was known to you? The *Father* under the *Jewish Law* (Numb. 30. 4.) might *null* the *Vow* of his *Child*, if he declared publickly against it in the *Day* that it came to his *Knowledge*; but if he was silent then, he confirmed it, and could not *annul* it afterwards. The *Case* is yours, Sir, and you cannot get off it. It is too late to disown the *decisive Sign* when you find it has failed, since you did it not before.

But however, let us return to your other *decisive Sign*, from which you cannot make this *Evasion*, that we may set you right any way.

Sir *Richard Bulkeley* acquaints us, (in the 87th Page of his Book) "That he was commanded, " by a *Message* delivered to him by one of the " *Inspired*, in the following Words; Be not a- " shamed to *declare* to the *World*, the *Grounds* on " which thou believest this *Voice* to be *Mine*,--- " Tell the *World* that open *Miracles*, publick *Attestations* from *Heaven*, shall be given this *City* before " May next; otherwise thou wilt own, that the *Lord* " hath not spoken by this *Voice*; nor will I suffer this " People to halt in their *Judgment* longer. Here is Sir *Richard's* Order by *Inspiration* for what he says, and by this *Inspiration* the *Sign* is published as *deciding* and *determining*.

Now,

Now, Sir, I argue thus; Here is a Promise in the *Extasie* of one of those you account *Inspired*, that *open Miracles* and *publick Attestations* from *Heaven* should be given this *City* before *May last*, or that it was to be granted and concluded, that the *Lord did not speak by the Voice of these Prophets*, and consequently, that they are moved by their own *Fancies*, or by the *Delusions* of the Devil; but these *open Miracles* and *publick Attestations* from *Heaven* were not given to this *City* before *May last*, and therefore the *Lord did not speak by them*. Here the time is *fixt* to be before *May last*, beyond all imaginable *Evasion*; and the things promised are not fulfill'd to this *Day*; therefore this *Prophetick Voice* has no *divine Authority*, and cannot be a *Foundation of Faith*. Yea, it is *impious and blasphemous*, and must be abhorred, renounced, and condemned by all that are the *Followers of Jesus Christ*; for they will not follow the *Voice of Strangers*. (John X. 5.) No Person of *Sense or Conscience* can be imagined to *believe and trust* in these *modern Prophecies*; because the *Spirit* by which they speak hath declared them to be of no *Credit*: God so ordering it in his *wise and good Oversight* of his *Church*.

I beseech you, Sir, do not act so unaccountably in a Case of such Danger laid open to your self and others. Be but consistent with your own Principles, and true to your own Declarations. Pray, Sir, let me put it to you freely. Did you think that to be the *Spirit of God*, concerning whom you said (God's Dealings, p. 31.) as to the *Resurrection of Dr. Emes*, unless some *Appearances of divine Attestations*, far above what has yet been, do *intervene between this and that Day*; my *Faith* will not suffice to obey the *Spirit* in going thither, where the

Body lies. What Spirit did you take this to be then, whom you had not Faith to obey in so small a thing as going a Mile or two to comply with his *Command*? There was a *Command*, or you could not refuse to obey him, as you plainly said. And tho' you had not the *Command* by your own Lips, you had it from one you call *Inspired*, which is all one; so that you endeavour to no purpose to make your *Evasion* this Way. Now have you in *Truth* had greater Appearances of *divine Attestation* since that Day? If not, where is there *Room* for halting and hesitating in so plain a Case? But here you are wanting to your self; and it grieves me to see you endeavouring rather to bring the Prophet *Jeremiah* into your Case, than to extricate your self: And then you think, that having the *President* of such a Prophet, tho' then in a *Passion* never to be imitated without *Blame*, you may with much Confidence cast the *Charge* of your *Delusions* (it is a *Grief* to speak it) upon God: For so you answer in the 12th Page of your Letter. *Many of the Persons professing themselves inspired, did, out of the Direction of that Spirit, think within themselves, and express it to others, that they would no more yield to the Operation of that Spirit as from God, in case that failed.* But that said *Resolution* within themselves, and *Declaration* of it to others, (*if People would give themselves leave to consider impartially*) amounts to no more than what once *Jeremiah* declared of himself, even in the same Place where he said, *O Lord, Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed, &c.*

Now, Sir, the more I consider this, the more I see that there is more in your Case than in the Prophet *Jeremiah's*; and I pray you to give your

self leave to consider it impartially, for the Case requires it. Can you say, there is no more in your Case than in the Prophet *Jeremiah's*? Was there any *appointed Day* for his Vindication? Did God say to him, if thy *Deliverance* come not such a *Day*, the *Lord* hath not spoken unto thee? If he did, produce it to make a Parallel. I challenge you in the Name of the *Great God*, whose Honour lies at Stake in this Point, to produce any one Instance in which a *Prophet of the Lord* failed in any declared *decisive Sign* concerning the *Truth* of his *Mission*: And if you can find no such, be not obstinate against God's standing Method of *Decision*. We read that *Moses*, the Servant of God, being controlled in his *divine Commission* by *Corah* and his *Accomplices*, brought the Matter to this *decisive Sign*, *Numb. XVI. 29, 30.* If these Men, saith he, die the common Death of all Men, or if they be visited after the *Visitation* of all Men, then the *Lord* hath not spoken by me. But if the *Lord* make a new thing, and the Earth open her Mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the Pit, then ye shall understand that these Men have provoked the *Lord*. Here was the *Sign*, and the Event punctually followed in the next Verses. And it came to pass, as he had made an End of speaking all these Words, that the Ground clave asunder that was under them, and the Earth opened her Mouth, and swallowed them up, and their Houses, and all the Men that appertained unto *Corah*, and all their Goods. Here was a very strict, a very sudden, and a very dreadful Verification.

So likewise in the Case of *Elijah* the Prophet of the *Lord*, in his Contest with the Prophets of *Baal*, ( *1 Kings 18. 24.* ) He proposes that two *Bullocks* be laid by him on his *Altar*, and two other

24. *An Answer to Mr. Lacy's Letter.*

being put under either ; and that the God that answered by Fire be acknowledged the true God. This was the decisive Sign, and the Event carried its own *Testimony*, as the Failure in the Event would have brought its own *Confusion*. And there was no *Demur* in the Peoples Acknowledgment ; for they all instantly fell on their *Faces* at the Descent of *Fire from Heaven* on *Elijah's Sacrifice*, and cried out, *The LORD he is the God, the LORD he is the God*, Ver. 39. I have not Room to recite other Instances, and indeed there is no need of them.

I do not know what can suspend your Declaration, Sir, in the Case before us, except it be that you have not Satisfaction in the Reasons you alledged for the divine Inspiration of these Prophets. Now I did say in the Preface to the *Remarks*, as you mind me in your Letter, that I thought it needless to refute those Arguments which have been published to prove the divine Mission of the *modern Prophets*, because the whole Dispute seems to me to be concluded by the *Failure* of their *decisive Signs*. This is indeed a full Reason to me still ; because when a thing is fully refuted by one irrefragable Argument, no other Arguments can establish it. But to retrieve you, Sir, and others, from such dangerous Errors, whose *Peace* and *Salvation* my Soul truly and earnestly desireth ; I will consider your Arguments as far as I can imagine it needful ; which is the *Fourth particular proposed*.

IV. I come now to consider your *Arguments* for the *Divinity of the Modern Prophets*.

I. You argue for the *Truth* of this *new Dispensation*, from the *Joy and Peace* you enjoy in it, which you account purely *Spiritual*, and find it to support you in your many *Trials and Sufferings*. But this is the usual *Plea* of Men under the most

gross Errors; especially if there be any visionary Enthusiasm in them. Whilst you think yourselves highly favoured of God, and imagine you hear his Voice almost every Hour: Whilst you fancy your selves near a *Paradicial State*, and expect continually the glorious *Treats* of the *heavenly Bridegroom*: Under these strong *Perswasions*, tho' mistaken, nothing less than a high *Spring-tide* of Joy can be imagined to flow. It made honest Mr. *Mason* and his followers to *sing* and *dance* continually. The *House* built on the *Sand*, gave *Comfort* to its *Inhabitants* for a time; but it will not stand in the *Winds* and *Tempests*, when we shall most need *Joy* and *Consolation*. The *Days* of *Death* and *Judgment* will try it; and if it be not founded on a *Rock*, the *Fall* and *Ruines* of it will be *great*. It is not *Joy* and *Peace* then that can prove us *safe*, but the *Foundation* on which they are grounded. This then is no Proof.

II. "The *Holy Ghost*, you say, is called the *Spirit* of *Prayer* and of *Supplication*; and you find "this abounding in all the Followers of the *Modern Prophets*. Now this, you think, cannot be imputed to the Devil as its Author. Nor have I, nor do I any where affirm, or imagine, that all you say or do is from *Evil Spirits*. Yea, I have only shew'd you in my *Remarks*, how far your own *Principles* and *Declarations* carry you to this *conclusion*; and I have all along kept to this *Ground*.

As to this case of your *Prayers*, I conceive in *Charity*, that much of it proceedeth from the devout *Inclinations* of your *Minds* and *Hearts*; and that you are put into these *Emotions* by the *Heat* of your disordered *Imaginations*; being continually fired by the *Thoughts* and *Expectations* of our *Saviour's* coming as a *Bridegroom*. This over-heat-

ed the Brain of pious Mr. *Mason* beforementioned, and this may be your case in some degree, *quoad hoc*. And as the *Deluder* seeks all Occasions to further our *Wandrings*, he hath certainly done whatever he could to push on the *Distemper*. As to the Prayers of your Children, I do not remember any of them published in your Accounts, nor have I an exact Account of them, which would be needful to a particular Answer: But I am well inform'd, that several Children in the Parish of *Waltham-Abbey* in *Essex*, that were descended of the People called *Quakers*, being there at School under a Schoolmaster of that *Profession*, were strangely *Agitated*; and they prayed and exhorted in a very strange manner, several Years ago. There are Witnesses of it that may be produced.

Neither is this then an *undeniable Proof* of what you design to prove by it, any more than the former. Whenever the *Deceiver* personates an *Angel of Light*, it must be in such amiable Colours as these, otherwise he could never be likely to *deceive the Elect*.

III. The *Answer of Prayers*, experienced by those that follow these Prophets, is the next Argument you bring for the *Divinity* of their *Inspirations*. And here you insist on the Return of Prayer in two *Instances*, which are to me the most considerable Arguments of all you give; namely, the express and particular *Answer of mental Prayer*, and the healing of *Diseases* by it.

I profess, I do not seek to evade any thing that appears to be of weight; which makes me own the *Force* of an Argument where I really find it.

Let us then consider the first Instance, wherein various People are said to have received *direct Answers to Prayers* which they had conceived in their *Hearts*,

not never uttered them with their Lips, nor ever committed them to Writing.

I reply, the Nature of this Argument is such, that only those who have the Experience of it can be convinced by it. We cannot know what was in their Hearts till they tell us; and when the thing is once spoken, it can make no Trial in this Case. We must indeed, in *Charity*, believe People that are of good Report, but we are not warranted to build our *Faith* on their Reports. Nor do I think that such as have experienced such *Answers*, have a sufficient Ground to believe the *Divine Inspiration* of the Person that gives the Answer. Such will do well to consider; that many wise and prying Men give great Guesses at the Minds and prepossessions of others: For indeed, we give many other indications of our Minds besides that of *Words*. And in the Case of a *troubled Mind*, or a *Mind heated in a great Degree with any new System*, and that *dwells* much on the Subject, which I take to be the Case before us, it cannot be very difficult to hit the Mark: especially for an *Evil Spirit*, who watcheth every Inclination, sigh, and whisper of those on whom he seeks *Advantages*; and cannot in such case want Indications of the Mind and Heart.

But our chief Answer is, These Prophets in their Extasies have uttered *false Things*, yea, many such, and have blessed such as God doth not bless; and therefore they are not actuated by the *Holy searcher of Hearts*: yea, they can be no more from God, than *bitter Waters* can come from a *sweet Spring*. To trust such as have *deceived us*, is an imprudence that no *wise Man* will do in the Case of the *small Concerns* of this World; and what can we say, if we are more wise for

The other Point is, The *Answer of the Prayer* put up for Sick People, who have been healed thereupon. But where this is done sincerely, it is God's appointed way ; for the *Prayer of Faith shall save the Sick.* (Jam. V. 15.) But we know of no *Miraculous Cures* done immediately by the Prayers of these Prophets, which we might reasonably expect from them that had the Promise of doing *greater Miracles* than our Blessed Saviour did : as it is said in the *Extasie of J. C. December 29. 1707.* Besides, many Distempers are certainly alterable by *vigorous Impressions* on the Mind, and we are told that the Devil does many *Cures* by *Charms* almost every Day ; and by unaccountable Methods, no way tending to a Remedy from *natural Efficiency*. Of this, the *Cure of Agues* and other *Distempers* by Words written and hanged about the Neck of the Person afflicted and by other such like unsuitable Methods, are a daily confirmation.

IV. The next Proof is that of *Visions*. But the Conceit of these Visionary Scenes, is so often the Effect of an *over-heated Brain* and of *Vapors*, that nothing can be imagined more likely to flow from the high Notions of this Dispensation. You will see such a vast Scene of this, so solidly refuted in the Learned Bishop *Stillingfleet's Book of the Fanaticism of the Church of Rome*, that I need say no more on the Point : Only please to Note, that you are not desired to ascribe this, or any thing else, to *Diabolical Agency*, which can be accounted for any other way. And indeed, I am in my own Judgment perswaded, that most of what you and the rest do, or have done, is the Effect of distempered *Minds*, strained with *over-high Notions*, and agitated with *over-eager Desires* of extraordinary

Things; I ascribe the Principal Matter chiefly to this. Only where you solemnly declare a Guidance sealed by a Foreign and Supernatural Power; I shew you the Danger of these Things, since they cannot be known from God; because they have falsifyed and failed beyond all rational Contradiction. Insomuch, that I do not perceive that the *Quakers*, *Familists*, and those many sorts of *Millennaries*, which have all of them risen up with the same *Pleas* and *Pretensions* that these *Modern Prophets* have done; have been so evidently refuted and *disprov'd*, as these have been: Or at least, not so fully *Self-condemned*.

V. As to your last Argument, the *Gift* of Languages; you say, Sir, that only *Five* of you have it, and these, say you, have but *small Earnests* of the *Gift*. And if to this we add, that some of these Persons have had some *Knowledge* of these Languages from *Study* and *Conversation*; and that *Evil Spirits* have sometimes been the *Authors* of this *Gift*, we can by no means admit it as a *Proof* of a *Divine Mission*.

I perceive, Sir, you have dropt the Argument of fore-telling *future Events*, without which the *Inspired* can scarce be call'd *Prophets*; and which is used by Sir *R. B.* as an Argument in their behalf. But I confess, you had good Reason to decline this Point, as it is hoped you will the rest upon mature consideration.

There is also another Argument used by good and charitable Persons in their Favour, which is, that these modern Prophets have uttered several *Exhortations* and *Prayers* that are in the matter of them, *pious* and *edifying*: now, say they, *every good and spiritual Gift is from God*, and therefore this is at least so far from him.

I reply. All *Good* is indeed from *GOD*, whether

ther natural, moral, or spiritual: And no ~~all~~ truly spiritual can be otherwise than the Effect of the Spirit of God; because it must proceed from a spiritual Person, who is formed into a new and spiritual State by spiritual Regeneration. But we must remember that every Resemblance of a spiritual State is not the thing. Many a Preacher has melted his Congregation into Tears, and perhaps reclaimed them from a sinful State, thro' the Grace of God, when it has not been his own happy Condition. Besides, many go far in good ways and then turn aside. Some begin in the Spirit and end in the *Flesh*. I will deal plainly with you, Sir, it seemeth to me that Sir R. B. and your self, whose Case I truly pity, and to whom I have born true Respect for the Good I have known in you both, have been surprized and vanquished for want of standing steady in your *Watch* and spiritual *Armour*. But as God has brought you to confess your Delusion in *part*, for God's Sake renounce all disingenuous *Shiftings* to decline the *whole*. To persist in an Error so dangerous against sufficient Light, is to bring much of the *Will* into it, which highly *aggravates*. It is my earnest Prayer, Sir, that God would awaken and reduce you; and then *Divine Goodness* can make you reap *Advantages* by your *Fall*; and render you more *humble*, *circumspect*, and *useful* thereby; which is the continued and *unfeigned Aim* and *Prayer* of,

*Sir,*

*Your faithful Friend,*

July 15.  
1708.

J. W.

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